

St. Raymond Nonnatus

Many of you are grandparents. Do you ever have problems with the way your children raise their children? In my own family, I noticed that with my parents and my brothers with my nephews and niece.

My parents often had something to say about how my brothers and their wives were raising their children. I believe it is because grandparents don't want their children to make the same child-rearing mistakes they often made.

Both parents and grandparents look at the same people and situations, yet each sees something different. I suspect this parent/grandparent tension is something like faith.

All humans basically look at the same things. People of faith simply see those things from a different perspective than those who have no faith. And there is something about the interrelationship between faith and imitation.

And I think there is something at play with grandparents wanting their children to imitate them, especially in child rearing.

Did you know that Jesus' earliest followers imitated him long before they worshiped him. At first, Jesus' disciples didn't have faith *in* Jesus; they shared the faith *of* Jesus. They imitated his faith.

This is important to know in this month of November that is dedicated to All Saints. The biblical authors have a unique definition of holiness. For them, to be holy doesn't imply a holier than thou bearing – hands folded and eyes heavenward. In the scriptures a saintly person is someone

who is “other”; someone who is different from those around him or her.

What the early followers of Jesus first did, was imitate him more so than to have faith in him. The Saints also give us their lives to imitate as they imitated Jesus and formed themselves into the image of Christ.

We ourselves can do no less in following the example of the Saints. But who are the Saints for you? I encourage you to name them for yourselves and learn something about them.

With this in mind, I want to begin telling you about the Saints in my life as I noted in a recent bulletin. And the first Saint I thought I should share with you is first of all my namesake.

To be honest with you, as Italian families often did, the first born son was named after the paternal grandfather. And my paternal grandfather was Raymond, or to be more exact, Remiggio, an ancient Italian name coming from the story of Romulus and Remus, the twin founders of the city of Rome, who as infants were cared for by a she-wolf. Remiggio is a derivative from the name Remus.

Of the Christian Saints who are Raymond, there are two I often identified as my patron saint: Raymond Nonnatus, whose feast day is August 31 and Raymond of Penteforte, whose feast day is January 7

I will tell you about Raymond Nonnatus and save the other Raymond for another day. Raymond was born at Portella, Catalonia, Spain. He was delivered by caesarean operation when his mother died in childbirth; the reason for his name non natus (not born).

He joined the Mercedarians under St. Peter Nolasco at Barcelona. He succeeded Peter as the chief ransomer and went to Algeria to ransom slaves. He remained as hostage for several slaves when his money ran out and was sentenced to be impaled when the governor learned that he had converted several Mohammedans.

He escaped the death sentence because of the ransom he would bring, but was forced to run the gauntlet. He was then tortured for continuing his evangelizing activities but was ransomed eight months later by Peter Nolasco. On his return to Barcelona in 1239, he was appointed Cardinal by Pope Gregory IX, but died at Cardona a short distance from Barcelona the next year while on the way to Rome.

He was canonized in 1657.

He is the patron saint of expectant mothers and midwives because of the nature of his own birth.

I look to St. Raymond as a saint of compassion, compassion for those who are suffering, whether the labors of birth or the labors of dying even as I minister to those who are ill and those who are actively dying.

As the month of November which is dedicated to All Saints I will share with you my life with the saints who have been a continuous part of my life.